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5. "Goethe's Idea of Polarity and its Sources." By Dr. Ewald A. Boucke, of the University of Michigan.

6. "Cato and Elijah." By Professor C. H. Grandgent, of Harvard University. [Read by title.] [See *Publications*, xvii, 1, p. 71.]

EXTRA SESSION, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26.

The Association met at 8.15 p. m. to hear an address by Professor E. S. Sheldon, President of the Association, on "Practical Philology." [See *Publications*, xvii, 1, p. 91.]

After this session President and Mrs. Charles W. Eliot received the members of the Association at their residence, 16 Quincy St.

SECOND SESSION, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27.

The session began at 9.30 a. m.

7. "The Relation of Shakespeare to Montaigne." By Miss Elizabeth R. Hooker, of Vassar College. [See *Publications*, xvii, 3, p. 312.]

8. "Classical Mythology as an Element in the Art of Dante." By Dr. Charles G. Osgood, of Yale University.

9. "The Amelioration of our Spelling." By Professor Calvin Thomas, of Columbia University. [See *Publications*, xvii, 3, p. 297.]

This paper was discussed by Professors H. E. Greene, F. N. Scott, O. F. Emerson, A. Cohn, E. H. Babbitt, L. R. Gregor, E. S. Sheldon, J. W. Bright, W. E. Mead, Dr. K. D. Jessen, and Col. T. W. Higginson.

Professor Emerson spoke as follows :

I am sure we all appreciate Professor Thomas's paper, and especially the delightful manner in which he has forestalled the many prejudices

against this subject. One point has been forcibly impressed upon me. It must be remembered, in connection with the suggestion of orthographic changes, that most people have little real conception of the spoken as distinct from the printed word. This includes not only adults, but our children and even the majority of teachers in our common schools. It results from learning English mainly by the eye, so that, owing to our vicious spelling, our minds and the minds of our children are burdened with an enormous number of ideographs almost as diverse and meaningless as those of the Chinese language. For example, call up the mental picture of the word *night*, and it will be found to contain in all our minds the quite useless *gh* and the so-called long *i* which inadequately represents a diphthong. The ideograph *knight* contains all these useless or inadequate forms, and a *k* which has not belonged to the spoken word for three centuries at least.

To counteract this lamentable difference between the spoken and printed word we have two equally ineffective means. The first is the diacritical marking of our dictionaries and other books, a scheme devised more than a century ago, when the study of the spoken language was in a most elementary state. The present system of diacritical marks is needlessly complicated because it attempts to follow the written word, with its numberless representations of the same sound. It is ineffective, because always interpreted, or misinterpreted, in accordance with the individual's conception of the signs employed. Let me illustrate. A professor of Latin told me a few years ago that his children were correcting his pronunciation. They said, "Papa, you must not say *frost* (with the sound of *o* in *lord*), but *frast* (with the sound of Italian *a*)." And this was the teaching of the school. The teacher, finding the *o* of *frost* marked short in the dictionaries, and interpreting short *o* as Italian *a* from her own pronunciation, was forcing this sound into words to which it was utterly foreign. The diacritical marks had been wholly ineffective, both in preventing misconception and in suggesting a consideration of the facts of the spoken language. The other means of counteracting the burdensome learning of ideographs is what is called "phonics" in the schools, a nondescript kind of phonetics, if I may so dignify it, which is intelligently used by neither teacher nor pupil.

While I agree, therefore, with all Professor Thomas has so well said, I think we must also educate the teachers of our common schools to the importance of taking greater account of the spoken word, before we can hope to be relieved of the burden of our barbarous spelling.

Professor Sheldon said :

Unity in spelling does not prevent divergence in pronunciation. Suppose that instead of teaching a uniform spelling, we try to teach the language itself, that is good pronunciation, pronunciation that is in accord with good usage, or at least some good usage. Those who now pronounce *fire* and *far*

alike, or *doll* and *dial* alike, in spite of the difference in spelling [examples cited by Professor Babbitt], at least those of them who wish to pass as well educated, would perhaps then feel a force exerted on them urging them to conformity with some recognized good usage. Our present spelling hides the real facts of divergence, and not being recognized they can the less easily be fought against.

I welcome the coming of chaos in orthography if it is to be the prelude to a better uniformity. Ultimately such better—much better—uniformity I believe is sure to come, though it may not be achieved even in this century.

10. "The Influence of German Opera upon Grillparzer." By Dr. Edward S. Meyer, of Western Reserve University. [In the absence of the author, this paper was read by title.]

11. "The Work of the American Dialect Society." By Professor O. F. Emerson, of Western Reserve University.

In presenting and emphasizing the work of the American Dialect Society, no apology is made for its absolute importance. Its relative importance to us as individuals may be variously estimated. But that a study of the spoken language of any country is fundamental to a correct and adequate knowledge of its linguistic basis ought not to be argued to-day.

The seriousness of our work is put first because one stumbling block to our progress is the misunderstanding of our aims. The study of dialect too often suggests the dilettante collector. This may be partly due to the apparent lack of seriousness in some of our published word-lists. But in reality there is ample justification for these. It is important to collect even the apparently ephemeral, the so-called slang, and the evident colloquialisms, since these often contain words which have merely dropped out of the literary language, or those which are equally valuable in illustrating some principle of linguistic development.

It is not necessary to consider the objection to our endeavors, less commonly urged at present, that there are no dialects in America. Notwithstanding considerable uniformity in the spoken language, as compared with older countries, a close examination shows many important changes since English was first introduced into this country. There are also many "speech-islands" in which the linguistic development has been but slightly effected by external influences for one or two centuries. The development of foreign languages on American soil is also well worth systematic study.

As to our own language, the work may be divided into two kinds, of quite different sort. The first is an exact study of phonology and inflection, or all grammatical forms, after the most exact methods of Germany. Of such studies we need some for each great dialectal division of the country, as New England, the North Central region, the South Atlantic